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CARTER'S INTELLIGENCE SIZES UP WORLD'S TROUBLE

*Interview With Adm. Stansfield Turner,
Director, Central Intelligence Agency*

On the eve of President Carter's departure on his first overseas mission—a summit conference with Allied leaders in London—Admiral Turner took the editors of *U.S. News & World Report* on a verbal tour of danger areas around the globe.



included the presidency, the Naval War College and command of Allied forces in Southern Europe. He attended the Naval Academy with President Carter, and later was a Rhodes Scholar.

Q Admiral Turner, do you agree with the view expressed by some high officials in recent years that the Soviet Union is an ascending power and the U.S. is declining?

A The Soviets have their strengths, and they have their weaknesses. Their weaknesses are in economics and politics. I don't see the Soviet economy climbing to outdistance us. Our lead is so great that they cannot hope to overtake us unless our percentage of growth every year were to be a lot smaller than theirs. And that is not happening. So, in terms of raw economic power, we are not a declining power.

As for ideology, the Russians may think it is a strength for them, but I am sure we would all agree that their ideology is hamstringing them in many ways. After all, what's left of pure Marxism? Where is it practiced or believed in? You have a different brand of Communism in every country in Europe—and a different brand in Yugoslavia, a different brand in China. Even in the Soviet Union, they don't hold to it very carefully. So—no, I don't think the Soviets are on the ascendancy ideologically.

Q And militarily?

A They have a strong military position. One of the reasons they are putting such emphasis on their military strength is that they are trying to convert military power into political advantage. They have no other strengths that they can exploit in Africa and elsewhere. Military is all that they have.

Q Is the U.S. falling behind Russia in military power?

A In my view, we still have the edge in the strategic nuclear field as a result of our preponderance of warheads and the accuracy of our missiles. However, the trends are moving in the other direction because of the substantial effort the Soviets are putting into strategic weapons. If that continues, they could close the warhead gap and outdistance us in what is known as throw weight.

The complex equation as to when those trends might give the Soviets a militarily superior position is very difficult to state—given the fact that you're balancing numbers of warheads, accuracies and throw weight in the same mix.

Q Are the Soviets near the point where they could knock out our land-based missile force with a first-strike attack, as some strategists claim?

A I don't see a first strike as being anything like a rational calculation in the years immediately ahead by either side. What concerns me is the image that is created and the impact this could have on world opinion if there is a perceived imbalance in favor of the Soviets in strategic

States must not let it get out of balance in fact or in perception. I don't think that the people of this country are going to let the Soviets outdistance us in a dangerous way. But we've got to be vigilant as to that.

Q We've heard a great deal lately about Russia's massive civil-defense program. Is there any danger that this will give them a decisive strategic advantage over us?

A Certainly not at the present time. I don't believe that the Soviets are near the point in civil defense where they could think that they could absorb a nuclear blow from us with reasonable loss—that is, a loss they would be willing to accept.

It doesn't seem to me that the damage to the three ingredients that civil defense protects—leadership, population and productive capacity—could be estimated by the Soviets to be small enough to make it an acceptable risk for them to initiate a nuclear war with deliberateness.

Q What truth is there to the report that the Russians have made a breakthrough in developing a beam that could destroy all of our missiles?

A The question of Soviet development of a charged-particle-beam weapon has been the subject of intensive analysis for a number of years. All the results of these studies have been made available to high-level U.S. Government officials on a continuing basis. The Central Intelligence Agency does not believe the Soviet Union has achieved a breakthrough which could lead to a charged-particle-beam weapon capable of neutralizing ballistic missiles. This question is obviously of concern to the U.S. Government, and is continually under review by all members of the intelligence community.

Q Aside from the idea of a first strike, are the Soviets thinking and planning in terms of actually fighting a nuclear war rather than just deterring one?

A The difference that I note between them and us is this: The Soviets in their planning start with cold war and think the process through all the way to a strategic nuclear war—and even to postwar recovery. We, on the other hand, tend to think from cold war to deterrence. There's less emphasis in our thinking on what happens after the nuclear weapons start going off, because the idea is so abhorrent.

It's a different psychological attitude. Maybe it comes from the fact that the Russians are from a country that's been attacked and overrun a number of times in their memory. So they have more of an inclination to think through the